
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Mullett Rowhouses	(x) Consent calendar
Address:	2519 and 2525 Pennsylvania Avenue NW	(x) Subdivision
Meeting Date:	June 24, 2021	(x) Addition
Case Number:	21-222	(x) Design development

The applicant, Patrick Bloomfield (P.T. Blooms LLC), agent for property owner 2525 Penn LLC (and with PGN Architects), requests the Board’s review of design development for a project at the center and western units of the three-unit 1889 Mullett Rowhouses. The combination of the buildings requires a combination of the two lots by subdivision. The project involves the construction of an addition at the fifth floor, a penthouse and a roof deck, plus a four-story rear addition joined by a one-story connector. There would be additional alterations and repairs.

At the April 22 hearing, the Board approved the concept to subdivide and build the additions and alterations, with the conditions that:

- 1) the applicant address the staff report comments relating to doors, windows and storefront;
- 2) the stucco be removed from the side wall, if feasible;
- 3) the paint be removed from the façade, if feasible;
- 4) there be less demolition of the party wall near the front of the buildings, if feasible;
- 5) the penthouse be shrunk, and/or relocated to make it substantially less prominent on the roof;
- 6) a preservation plan be developed for the treatment of the façade masonry, the windows and the front roofing; and
- 7) the project return for review of design development that addresses these conditions and allows more time for community discussion of the project.

We understand that the applicant has discussed the project with some neighbors, and as of the date of this report’s writing, HPO has received no additional correspondence. Of course, this being a landmark standing outside any historic district, the standard for review is retention of and compatibility with the landmark itself. Any relevant impacts on adjacent properties will presumably be addressed at a future Board of Zoning Adjustment hearing for the proposed rear addition.

The new renderings provide a better sense of the rear addition.

Demolition of the party wall has been reduced substantially.

The proposed removal of paint and stucco will still require some exploratory work.

The penthouse has been shrunk, pulling its front wall rearward. While this will not render it invisible from all points on the ground, it will sufficiently reduce its conspicuousness.

There is not much of a preservation plan presented, but the notes on the elevations indicate that most of the masonry, openings, and window units shall remain (although the dormer windows and rear windows appear to need replacement). The mansard and tower roofing are also said to remain, but this could easily change as the project proceeds. There are already missing slates. Any roof replacement—whether spot or wholesale—should be done in matching slate, befitting a high-Victorian landmark that has retained its original roofing this long.

There are two more areas, raised in the previous staff report, that deserve further revision. First is the new and altered window openings. Introduced to the side elevation of 2525, the proposed windows are generally acceptable as not too numerous, nor too close to the front, nor intruding into the attic. Single punched openings would be preferred to double-ganged windows, but if windows are to be ganged, they should have substantial mullions between the frames. The nature of the window arches is unclear; the drawings suggest something applied and projecting, which is discouraged (but segmental brick arches might be intended). It is recommended that the heights and proportions of these windows be closer to those of the front and rear windows, and that they have single- or double-hung one-over-one sash. Also, the storefront has been improved, with a reduction of its extent at 2525 Pennsylvania and its introduction between the projecting bays. But the ground-floor opening at 2525 should remain the same width as the window opening above, for consistency and so that no additional masonry demolition is necessary. No storefront product has yet been proposed, but something more appropriate than a generic mill-finish, rectangular-section system is called for.

The second area that should be revisited is the material of the exposed walls of the fifth-floor addition. To further distinguish the new construction and rationalize its relatively huge openings, it should be clad in a roofing-type material, such as a dark-colored standing-seam metal. This would also avoid trying to span the broad openings with masonry arches or lintels.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve design development and delegate further review to staff, with the conditions that: 1) the applicant adequately address the above comments relating to doors, windows and storefront; 2) the stucco be removed from the side wall, if feasible; 3) the paint be removed from the façade, if feasible; 4) any replacement of roofing on the mansard and tower be done with matching slates; and 5) the fifth-floor addition be clad with roofing-type material, such as a dark-colored standing seam metal.